EU Customs Union - Facts and figures

2019

EU Customs Union – unique in the world
Customs see what you don’t…and protect you
Customs are business friendly

Customs duties mean revenue
Customs cooperates
28 EU Member States

- Full 'Facts and figures' section
- 50 years of the EU Customs Union
- 'EU customs union' brochure (Part of 'The EU explained' series)
EU Customs Union – unique in the world

In 2018, the EU Customs Union celebrated its 50th anniversary. It is a unique example of an area where a number of countries apply a uniform system for handling the import, export and transit of goods and implement a common set of rules called the Union Customs Code (UCC).

A common tariff of customs duties is being used on imports from outside the EU and there are no customs duties levied at the borders between EU countries. Duty on goods from outside the EU is generally paid when they first enter the EU. From then on, there are no more customs duties to pay and no more customs checks will apply - all goods circulate freely within the EU Customs Union.

The EU Customs Union is essential for the proper functioning of the single market. In practice, National customs services in all EU countries work together as one to manage the day-to-day operations of the Customs Union. The European Commission proposes the EU customs legislation and monitors its implementation.

The EU is the largest trading bloc in the world

The EU is the largest trading block in the world, accounting for over 15% of the world trade, alongside the United States and China.

In 2019, the value of the EU trade with other countries amounted to EUR 4.09 trillion¹.

Half of EU external trade was mainly with five main partners: the United States, China, Switzerland, Russia and Turkey.

Source: Eurostat

¹ trillion = 1 x 10¹².
To manage this volume of international trade in 2019, more than 2,000 EU customs offices, working 24 hours a day and 365 days a year, handled the import, export or transit of over **868 million** articles. The amount of customs duties collected in 2019 reached € 26.7 billion.

**CUSTOMS UNION in Numbers 2019**

- **IMPORT**
  - 561.5 million items declared
- **TRANSIT**
  - 16.4 million movements
- **EXPORT**
  - 390.7 million items declared

**Per 1 second...**
- (import and export)
  - 27 items declared
  - €153 000 declared customs value

Source: DG Taxation and Customs Union and Eurostat

**Various means of carrying freight are used in the EU trade**

The most frequently used form of transport in the EU trade is maritime transport, followed by air and road transport.

![Import and Export Modal Shares 2019](image)

Source: Eurostat
Customs see what you don’t…and protect you

Customs authorities are in the front line in the fight against fraud, terrorism and organised crime, cooperating effectively with administrations and agencies responsible for other relevant policies with border and internal security implications.

Over 91,000 officials work around the clock at airports, border crossings, sea ports, inland customs offices or customs laboratories to manage the day-to-day operations of the Customs Union and to prevent illegal and/or dangerous goods from entering the EU.

When human senses are not enough to detect certain types of illegal goods, customs officers team up with sniffer dogs that specialise in detecting illegal drugs, suspicious food, explosives or even large amounts of cash.

Photo: Italian Customs Authorities.

THE CUSTOMS UNION PROTECTS...

… against the international trafficking of **drugs** and helps to stop criminal organizations which make money selling drugs.

… against the smuggling of **tobacco and cigarettes** - to stop dangerous and/or counterfeited tobacco products from being sold in the EU.

… against the international trafficking of **weapons**, helping to dismantle criminal organizations and to combat terrorism.

In 2019, EU customs seized more than 3699 **firearms**, over 400 000 pieces of **ammunitions** and more than 7 500 pieces of **explosives** in the EU.

*Between 85% and 100% of relevant data*
... the health and safety of citizens as well as the jobs of those who work for legitimate manufacturers by tackling counterfeit goods and piracy.

- On more than 91,000 occasions, products suspected of violating intellectual property rights were intercepted by the Customs in the EU.

Photo: Counterfeit car spare parts seized by Latvian customs

...the environment, our health and safety by enforcing the respective rules (e.g. stopping illegal import of protected wood, refusing entry of contaminated food or potentially dangerous electrical appliances).

In 2019, Customs in the EU detected 31,961 cases of goods presenting a risk for consumers in terms of health (sanitary, phyto-sanitary and veterinary technical standards).

Over 41 million items were identified as unsafe or non-compliant in terms of product safety.

Photo: Dolls with excessive level of phthalates seized by Polish customs

...endangered species by detecting illegal trade in ivory, protected animals, birds and plants and European cultural heritage by checking for smuggled art treasures.

- 5,398 infringements of CITES regulations were detected.
- 84 cases were detected which did not respect the rules on exports of cultural goods.

Photo: Stolen artefacts seized by French customs and returned to their country of origin (Pakistan)

...the society by fighting against money laundering and the financing of terrorism by also controlling cash flows in the EU.

Travelers entering or leaving the EU are obliged to declare amounts of cash valued at EUR 10,000 or more (or its equivalent in other currencies or bearer negotiable instruments) to customs authorities. In 2019:

- More than 113,000 cash declarations were submitted to Customs, amounting to more than EUR 55 billion.
More than 13,100 cases of non-declared cash or incorrectly completed cash declarations were recorded, amounting to over EUR 330 million.

Photo: currencies seized by Hungarian customs during a control

...the financial interests of the European Union by ensuring correct and efficient collection of duties, detection, investigation into and prosecution of fraud.

The amount of unpaid duties detected

...the society by ensuring that exports of sensitive technology which could be used to make nuclear or chemical weapons are legitimate and have the appropriate export licenses.

...the society by helping police and immigration services in the fight against human trafficking, drugs, pornography and firearms – and other factors of organized crime and terrorism.
Customs are business friendly

The Union Customs Code aims to maintain a proper balance between customs controls and facilitation of legitimate trade, to enable the EU to prosper and develop competitive businesses.

Business operators

To be able to carry out commercial activities related to importing and exporting goods (in the role of a consignee, declarant or representative), business operators have to register in the Economic Operators Identification and Registration system (EORI).

At the end of 2019 there were over 7 million entities registered in the EORI system.

Authorised Economic Operators (AEO)

An important instrument for trade facilitation is the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) regime. AEO status provides for a more favorable treatment in the areas of customs simplification and facilitation. AEOs are playing an increasingly important role in the supply chain in terms of the number of goods declared.

Source: DG Taxation and Customs Union
**Simplifications**

Simplifications such as the simplified procedure or authorised warehouses enable business operators to perform customs procedures faster and more efficiently reducing administrative burden and costs.

**Paperless environment**

The electronic customs systems are crucial for the operation of the Customs Union. The replacement of paper based customs procedures with EU wide electronic procedures has created a more efficient and modern customs environment.

Nowadays nearly all customs declarations are submitted electronically. With the ongoing implementation of the Union Customs Code electronic systems, EU traders will be able to use customs electronic systems for other elements of their business operations.

**Customs duties mean revenue**

Customs duties are one of the sources of income for the budget of the EU and its Member States.

---

**CUSTOMS DUTIES 2019**

- **2 050 billion IMPORT**
- **26.7 billion COLLECTED**
- **EU BUDGET 21.3 billion transferred to the EU budget**

**Per 1 imported article**

- **4 443€ of value**
- **1.3% of article value collected**
- **58€ collected**

Source: DG Taxation and Customs Union and Eurostat
Duties collected in 2019 increased compared to 2018, reaching EUR 26 707 billion, in line with the sustained rise in the value of goods imported. The share of customs duties in the total EU revenue remained stable at 13% in 2019. The picture below shows the structure of EU revenue in 2019.

Source: DG Budget
* GNI- Gross National Income

**Customs cooperate**

Wider international cooperation is crucial in protecting the interests of EU citizens and business worldwide. The EU has signed more than 50 international agreements providing for customs cooperation and mutual administrative assistance with 80 countries outside the EU to support controls and enforcement and to simplify and harmonise customs procedures, which in turn reduces the administrative burden and costs for European companies.

Four new customs cooperation agreements were concluded in 2019 which significantly increased the share of EU trade covered (84.2% compared to 78.4% in 2018). These agreements ensure administrative assistance between EU and third country customs authorities in regards to the correct application of preferential rules of origin.

**Technical assistance**

The mutual exchange of knowledge and experience with non-EU customs administrations helps to increase their quality of service.

The technical assistance covered training, capacity building, sniffer dog training, etc.
International cooperation and trade

The EU trade volume with non-EU countries, with which the EU has a binding agreement on customs cooperation, represents a major proportion of EU external trade.
28 EU Member States – links to national customs websites